

The Christ Church History and Archives committee has been formed to collect, document and preserve the material and social history of the Parish and to encourage participation and involvement of all parishioners.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

The blessing of animals is a tradition in many cultures. For centuries, Judaic ceremonies were held to celebrate the part that animals play in the lives of humans. Sometimes ceremonies were held in the Spring of the year in connection with the 7th day of Passover and sometimes in the Fall to coincide with the Torah readings about Noah's Ark. Canada's First Nations people considered animals sacred and they thanked their spirits for their sacrifice.

In the Christian faith, St. Francis of Assisi, born around 1182, is most closely associated with today's Blessing of the Animals, which usually occurs on Oct. 4, his feast day. While born to wealth, as an adult he responded to God's call of a life of poverty, travelled the countryside and preached about love for all God's creation including animals, and birds. In 1209 the Franciscan Order of Friars was formed, and in 1228 the Roman Catholic Church declared him a Saint.

In the Anglican tradition, which has one of the richest histories of this ritual of any denomination, rural animals have been blessed since medieval time. However it has only been in the last decades that urban Anglicans became even more devoted to the practice. While the new passion for the ritual has been traced to a 1930's blessing event in Rome at the Piazza St. Eusebius, it is equally attributed to the new environmental movement of the 1970's. Since then many Anglican parishes reintroduced what has become a very popular celebration in their annual calendar.

At Christ Church, the Blessing of the Animals began in 2010 under the direction of the now Very Revd. M. Ansley Tucker and a team of parishioners. It was a collaborative effort viewed as a good way to get community members interested and involved with the church. At Christ Church, the blessing has mainly been of smaller animals and dogs although, like the Anglican Cathedral of the Redeemer in Calgary, we have on occasion included a Mounted Police horse. The Blessing has been held in the Crump Room, in the church, and outside by the labyrinth. Pet owners in the neighborhood also attend the ceremony, sometimes out of curiosity, but then they stay because of the warmth, caring and hospitality - including treats brought by a parishioner.

Parishioners are invited to contact John Mendham (jhmendham@telus.net) or other committee members, if they would like a longer historical essay on this subject, or if they have oral or tangible records they would like to donate.



(Photos: Cheyne Parkinson)

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Rectors and Interim Priests:

Horne	1913 – 1929	Tatchell	1966 – 1980	Tucker	2005 – 2015
Luxton	1930 – 1933	Curtis	1980 – 1983	Belcher	2015 – 2016
Kemp	1933 – 1944	O'Driscoll	1984 – 1992	Pickett	2016 – Present
Crump	1944 – 1960	Boyles	1992 – 1993		
Dowker	1960 – 1966	Pike	1993 – 2003		